

# TRANSPORTATION AND PARKING COMMISSION

CITY OF NORTHAMPTON, MASSACHUSETTS

## Minutes ~~set~~ for August 19, 2014

4:00 PM – 6:00 PM

City Council Chambers, 212 Main Street, Northampton

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*Minutes taken by William Hargraves*

1. Meeting Called to Order: 4:07 pm
2. Announcement of Audio/Video Recording  
Completed by TPC Chair, Mr. O'Donnell
3. Members present and absent/introductions

Present: Mr. O'Donnell, Ms. Klein, Mr. Huntley, Mr. Feiden, Mr. Pomerantz, Mr. Hargraves, Ms. Bruce, Mr. Lowenthal. Absent: Mr. Sienkiewicz, Mr. Hartwell, Mr. Cooper.  
A quorum was present for the meeting to begin.

4. Public Comment Period

**Jack Pezanelli, Hatfield St.**

**Issue: traffic concern on Hatfield due to heavy truck traffic.. Mr. Pezanelli proposed two diversions of truck traffic from Hatfield St: (1). At the intersection of N. Elm St. and Hatfield St.in the direction towards Bridge Rd., trucks would be directed to turn left past the cement plant, St. Mary's cemetery in order to reach Bridge Rd., and (2) at the intersection of Bridge Rd and Hatfield St., trucks would be directed to intersection of the N. Elm St. and Bridge Rd. for turning left. Mr. Pezanelli believes the truck traffic has damaged foundations. Mr. Pomerantz asked Mr. Pezanelli if a traffic study had been done. Mr. Pezanelli stated it hadn't and his estimation of traffic was based on his perception.**

**Cynthia Kochan, Day Ave.**

**Ms. Kochan listed damages to the house in the past ten years due to the heavy truck traffic. Most recently, a tiled ceiling had failed and fallen on the living room floor. Ms. Kochan listed costs of repairs, some she believed required reimbursement from the City of Northampton. Ms. Kochan proposes making Day Ave. a one-way street headed south.**

**George Kohout, State St.**

**Mr. Kohout spoke in favor of the restoration of the Hotel Bridge in Leeds in order to augment the availability of multi-modal access.. Mr. Kohan spoke in favor of a "hard" surface for the extension of the Leeds end of the rail trail towards Haydenville because TRG (trap rock gravel) surfaces are difficult to maintain, particularly in the winter.**

**Deb Jacobs, Leeds.**

**Ms. Jacobs spoke in support of the Hotel Bridge rehabilitation and reiterated her previous comments to the TPC in support of a surface similar to the bike trail at the DAR, Goshen, MA.**

**Craig Della Penna, Chestnut St., Florence.**

**Mr. Della Penna voiced his support of the Hotel Bridge restoration in Leeds.**

**Mr. Della Penna stated that most rail trails in the U.S. use stone dust.**

**Mr. Della Penna raised concerns for traffic calming around the bike path crossing on Chestnut St.**

**Residents have had cars "keyed" when an effort was made by residents to stagger parking on each side of the street and recently a bicyclist was injured in an accident at this location. Mr. Della Penna spoke to a need for a "speed table," a mid-block crossing "somewhere down the street." Mr. Della Penna plans to**

submit a Traffic Calming Application (TCA) to formalize the need. Mr. Lowenthal asked if any agency had conducted a traffic study at the location. TPC members and citizens present were not aware of any. Mr. Lowenthal noted that Mr. Della Penna's submission to the TPC listed (15) signatures and wanted to know if this was the group's TCA.. Mr Della Penna stated he would return with the complete package for submittal to the TPC.

Penny Geis, Leeds.

Ms Geis was not present for the Public Comment period of the agenda, however, Mr. O'Donnell solicited additional public comment after noting new arrivals to the meeting. Ms. Geis supported removing the mid-block crosswalk on New South St. The Pulaski Park redesign will increase pedestrian crossing traffic. Safety of pedestrians would be better served by directing them to the light-protected crosswalk at the intersection of Main and New South St.

## **REPORTS and ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **5. Approval of Minutes for June 16, 2014**

Motion to open for discussion: Mr. Lowenthal/Seconded: Ms. Klein

Discussion: Mr. O'Donnell noted a change regarding the sequence of motions for agenda item (10) - **Amend Ordinance § 312-80 – Bike Lanes**. Subsequent discussion by TPC members addressed agenda items (11) - **Amend Ordinance §312-102 Schedule I - Parking Prohibited at all times**.and (12) - **Amend Ordinance § 312-104 Schedule III – Limited-Time Parking**. The incorrect identification of agenda item (10) was not noted by members of the TPC at the time, however, the minutes discussed here are for agenda items (11) - **Amend Ordinance §312-102 Schedule I - Parking Prohibited at all times**.and (12) - **Amend Ordinance § 312-104 Schedule III – Limited-Time Parking**. The change in the meeting notes will reflect that the TPC voted to add its name to the DPW as sponsors before a positive recommendation to the City Council.

Mr. Huntley provided the correct spelling of "Sharrow" for the record.

Vote: The initial vote of (5) affirmatives and (3) abstentions led to discussion of meeting rules. The (3) abstention votes were based on the TPC members (Mr. Feiden, Ms. Bruce, Mr. Pomerantz) belief that they could not vote on the approval of minutes for a meeting they hadn't attended. Mr. O'Donnell explained that TPC meeting rules require a quorum of attending TPC members for approval of an agenda item. Ms. Bruce changed her vote to affirmative.

The final vote was (6) Yes; (2) Abstentions.

### **6. Brief Announcements and Updates by Commission Members**

None

### **7. Reports from Committees**

#### **a. Parking Committee (PC) (H. Mott)**

The committee has not met since the last TPC meeting where the "Parking Principles" were presented by Ms. Mott. Mr. O'Donnell and Mr. Feiden decided to postpone (without a motion) further discussion until the September, 2014 TPC meeting.

#### **b. Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee (BPC) (J. Lowenthal)**

Mr. Lowenthal reported that many of the people attending this TPC meeting were also at the Bicycle and Pedestrian meeting. The attendees spoke in favor of a non-hard surface for the Leeds extension of Northampton Rail Trail. The BPC supported a hard surface in the past, however, discussions have continued on other surfaces. Mr. Lowenthal wanted to make clear the hard surface recommendation wasn't final. It is for further discussion after the City of Northampton hires a consultant and reviews the report.

Mr. Lowenthal stated that Mr. Feiden had informed the BPC that an easement had been obtained from the railroad for the underpass that will link multiple rail trails in Western Massachusetts and trails to the east. Once work is completed by National Grid, the goal is to have construction begin in 2015.

Pleasant St. has had some activity, but more is expected depending on a grant acquisition to make it more pedestrian friendly.

Prioritization of rail trail projects was discussed. BPC members supported a connection between the Route 66, the "Ice Pond" rail trail and the Manhan Rail Trail as its first priority.

The BPC members discussed an "off ramp" from the rail trail in the vicinity of the Look Restaurant because the current path is not adequate or safe.

Mr. Lowenthal noted that the New South St. and Main St. redesign includes design criteria to accommodate 65' long trailers turning from Main St. onto New South St. The design is counter to pedestrian safety where narrow streets and wide sidewalks are preferable. Within this intersection plan, the BPC had discussion seeking consensus on retaining the mid-block crosswalk on New South St. where it leads to the Pulaski Park entrance. There were diverse opinions and not full support for reporting out that the BPC endorsed keeping the crosswalk. No votes were taken on the subject, however, a majority of the BPC support retention.

c. Public Transportation / Transit Committee (PTC)(Mr. Feiden)

The committee hasn't met recently. Mr. Feiden informed TPC members that on 10:00 a.m. on September 5, 2014 at the Academy of Music, there would be a ribbon cutting for the new Pioneer Valley Transit Authority (PVTa) service.

8. DPW Updates (Mr. Huntley)

Paving operations are in full-swing and completion is expected in October, 2014.

Ms. Klein asked for the schedule for completion of the paving on N. Main St., Florence. Mr. Huntley believed the paving would be completed by the end of next week (August 29, 2014). Striping would be done subsequently.

**APPOINTMENTS and REQUESTS**

9. none

**ORDERS and ORDINANCES**

10. Ordinance: Amend: §312-109 Schedule VIII: On Street Parking Meter Zones (DPW)

11. Ordinance: Amend: §312-104 Schedule III: Limited-Time Parking (DPW)

Mr. Huntley described the need for the amendments to the ordinances. With the exception of the 15-minute parking spaces behind City Hall, all other 15-minute parking spaces have not been designated in the ordinances. The amendments seek to address the gap.

Mr. Feiden, at Mr. O'Donnell's suggestion, moved to consider the agenda items 10 and 11 as a group. Mr. Pomerantz seconded the motion.

Discussion: Mr. O'Donnell stated his concerns about consistency in agreement between the two ordinances, particularly in regard to Old South St. and Green St. The discussion led to technical investigation about locations and overlaps. In fact, there were no discrepancies or overlaps.

Mr. Feiden asked the Parking Enforcement Administrator, Nanci Forrestall, in attendance whether the 15-minute parking restriction is enforceable 24-hours per day. Ms. Forrestall stated It is enforceable for the 24-hours.

Mr. Feiden proposed a consideration for making the 15-minute parking spaces behind City Hall to terminate at 6:00 p.m.

Ms. Forrestall stated support for the clarification of enforcement times similar to the signage for Electric Vehicles that include the phrase, "at all times." Police officers can supplement enforcement when Parking Enforcement officers are not on duty.

Mr. Feiden explained that two 15-minute parking spaces behind City Hall (closest to City Hall) will be designated for use by "Zip Cars."

Ms. Klein stated support for uniform 15-minute parking space enforcement, i.e., 24-hours per day. Mr. Feiden explained that the City Hall 15-minute parking spaces were underutilized after 6:00 p.m. and not used in the same manner as those located near key businesses, typically food service. Ms. Bruce stated support for terminating 15-minute parking enforcement at 6:00 p.m. behind City Hall. TPC members then proposed adding another line to the amendments to designate the City Hall 15-minute parking spaces from the third to the sixth as enforceable between 8:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. Mr. O'Donnell stated that the City Council Ordinance Committee may more easily make amendments to the ordinances under consideration. Vote to send the grouped amendments forward to the City Council with a positive recommendation was unanimous (8 – 0)

## **DISCUSSION ITEMS**

### **12. Compression release engine brakes (“Jake brakes”) and associated signage. (Councilor Klein)**

Ward 7 constituents have raised concerns about noise from compression braking to Ms. Klein. Ms. Klein asked for previous history on TPC efforts to address the problem.

The TPC has had previous discussions on the topic. Ms. Bruce recalled researching City of Northampton ordinances that could cover compression braking. Ms. Bruce stated it was an enforcement issue and in order to be successful the violator would have to be stopped at the location. Additionally, documentation of the noise level would be necessary. Enforcement based on the perception of the enforcement officer is inadequate. Ms. Bruce looked at other communities and didn't find a suitable ordinance with enforcement available.

Ms. Klein asked if signage has been installed in areas of concern.

Mr. Huntley provided information that the City of Northampton is precluded from placing signage on state roads. Ms. Klein set Florence St. and Bridge Rd. as the areas of concern.

Mr. Huntley described compression braking as a safety measure requirement for trucks. Vermont transportation officials have concluded that the placement of signage prohibiting compression braking is not supported by state statute or ordinance..

Ms. Klein stated her research has shown that mufflers have been required on compression brakes since 1978.

Mr. Huntley stated that putting signage on all roads of entry to the City of Northampton, plus at locations of special concern, may lead to a “litter” of signs.

Ms. Klein questioned the cost of sign installation at locations of special concern.

Mr. Huntley stated it was an easy fix and estimated the cost at \$200 per sign.

Mr. O'Donnell explained issues of noise may be pre-empted by state law.

Mr. Hargraves posed the question of inspection of vehicles equipped with compression brakes as a means of enforcement. Mr. Hargraves questioned the availability of a complaint process to either a state or federal jurisdiction for “bad actors.”

Ms. Bruce stated that the Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance (CVSA) conducts inspections of trucks.

Ms. Bruce would look into a reporting mechanism to the CVSA. State police use CVSA standards to conduct roadside inspection. Ms. Bruce cited the hill on South St., Route 10 from Easthampton, descending to the intersection with New South St. where signage could be considered. Ms. Bruce stated that placement of signs regarding compression braking will at least let people know that the City of Northampton has attempted to address the issue, even though Ms. Bruce thinks an ordinance is not enforceable.

Ms. Klein thanked the TPC members for their information and she will continue further research on the topic.

### **13. Restoration of the Hotel Bridge in Leeds. (Councilor Klein)**

Ms. Klein provided detailed background on the Hotel Bridge, also known as “Old Shephard Road Bridge connecting Main St. and Water St. in Leeds. An engineering report by Stantec Consulting Services, Inc., Northampton, MA has been completed and is available from the City of Northampton website

The Leeds Civic Association is asking the City of Northampton to remove the Jersey barriers at both ends of the bridge.

Ms. Klein asked attendees at the meeting who would like to comment (without a motion).

Mr. Jason Johnson, Main St., Leeds stated support from his involvement with the Mill River Greenway Project.

Mr. Feiden asked if the current roadway on the bridge would be replaced by a lighter decking suitable for pedestrians and bicycles.

Mr. Huntley explained that the Stantec Consulting Services, Inc. engineering report addresses this situation for rehabilitation.

Ms. Klein stated that all the efforts by all involved would hopefully lead to the bridge's inclusion into the National Historic Register, another means of funding.

Heidi Stevens, Upland Rd. spoke in support of removing the Jersey barriers and replacement with large cement planters that are more pleasing to the eye.

Mr. George Kohout asked about a public hearing to discuss the StanTec Consulting Services, Inc. engineering report.

Mr. Huntley stated that a meeting date would be planned during September, 2014.

John Dietrich, Upland Rd., Leeds stated that he is working with a UMASS engineering professor on the National Historic Registry application.

#### 14. Current handicapped parking violation fines and possible increase of fines under MGL Chapter 40, Sec 21. (N. Forrestall)

Ms. Forrestall described the change in the law that allows a local jurisdiction to set the fine between \$100 - \$300. Northampton's fine is currently \$100. An informal telephone survey conducted by Ms. Forrestall of local communities found the handicapped parking fees set at many different levels.

Mr. Huntley asked how many tickets a year are processed for this violation classification.

Ms. Forrestall stated that since January, 2014, (35) tickets have been issued. In that time period (25) handicapped stickers had been seized for alteration, expiration or misuse.

Mr. Lowenthal asked Ms. Forrestall if she had a recommendation on the fine amount, and if it was set at a high level would it be a disincentive to parking enforcement officers to issue a citation.

Ms. Forrestall did not think it would be a disincentive to issuance of a citation. A recommended fine level was not addressed.

Mr. Pomerantz asked about setting a \$200 fine as a barrier to Parking Enforcement Officers (PEO) to write citations.

Ms. Forrestall believes PEOs support appropriate use of the handicapped placards and a higher fine would support their effort.

In response to questions, Ms. Forrestall explained that Handicapped Parking Spaces are heavily used; the Northampton Police Department has issued citations in areas outside of the central business district.

Mr. O'Donnell asked about the designation of parking fines.

Ms. Forrestall stated that all collected fines accrue to the local jurisdiction and the fines collected go to the Disability Commission.

Mr. Lowenthal asked if the Parking Committee had considered the request.

Ms. Forrestall stated it hadn't.

Subsequent discussion among TPC members led Mr. O'Donnell to stating his intention to making a referral the PC for consideration at their next meeting.

In response to a question from Mr. O'Donnell, Ms. Forrestall explained that the authorization for the parking fine is found under the fine schedule.

Mr. O'Donnell asked about the penalty for forging a handicapped placard.

Ms. Forrestall explained two possible means. Ms. Forrestal can prepare a package regarding the violation for the Medical Affairs Office of the Registry of Motor Vehicles for their enforcement, or the Parking Enforcement Officer (PEO) can involve the Police Department at the time of discovery and the PD can issue a citation under Chapter 90, Massachusetts General Laws, for \$500.

Mr. O'Donnell recommended working with Ms. Forrestall and the Parking Committee to bring an ordinance to the TPC September, 2014 meeting.

15. Leeds traffic mitigation (W. Feiden)

Mr. Feiden explained that due to an accrual of funding, approximately \$200,000 is available for design and planning. Brick and mortar spending would require involvement with the City Council.

Mr. Feiden posed the question of starting neighborhood meetings in Leeds.

Ms. Klein, who represents Leeds as a City Councilor, thought it a good idea. Members of the Leeds Civic Association present at the meeting were in agreement with Ms. Klein.

Mr. Lowenthal explained that many projects have been proposed for Leeds, however, the source of this funding may have strings attached in that any proposal would have to meet certain criteria.

Ms. Bruce asked if this topic could be added to the regular agenda of the Leeds Civic Association meeting scheduled for September 9, 2014.

Ms. Bruce noted that the bulk of this funding is coming from a Route 9 construction project.

Mr. O'Donnell asked Ms. Heidi Steven (in attendance) if the September 9, 2014 meeting of the LCA would include this topic.

Ms. Stevens stated that another meeting date for this topic would be set at the September 9, 2014 LCA meeting.

16. South Main St line painting. (Councilor O'Donnell)

Mr. Huntley explained that Traffic Calming Application (TCA) #13 addresses this concern.

Mr. Lowenthal provided information that painting lines may increase speeds.

Ms. Bruce raised the issue of TCA ranking and prioritization. Selecting TCA #13 at this time would circumvent the procedures set forth in TCA ranking criteria and move it ahead of others.

Mr. O'Donnell sought an answer to either adding this item to the September, 2014 TPC meeting or continuing offline. The DPW will look at it further. No conclusive answer was reached to Mr. O'Donnell's question.

17. Commercial trucks on Hatfield St and N. Elm. (Councilor O'Donnell)

**Mr. Huntley explained that a "Truck Exclusion" study would be required by Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MASSDOT) rules.**

**Mr. Feiden raised a concern about the geometry of the intersection at N. Elm St. and Bridge Rd. and whether trucks could turn safely there.**

**Mr. Huntley, in response to Mr. O'Donnell's question on the feasibility of the traffic study, stated it may only be possible to conduct traffic counts before winter.**

Ms. Klein asked if a formal Traffic Calming Application would be necessary.

Mr. Huntley explained that truck exclusions were not a traffic calming measure.

Mr. Lowenthal stated that traffic counts and considerations for diversion of traffic are not part of traffic calming studies.

18. New Business – Reserved for topics that the Chair did not reasonably anticipate would be discussed  
None

19. Adjourn

Motion to adjourn: Mr. Feiden; Seconded by Mr. Pomerantz.

Discussion: None

Vote: Unanimous (8 – 0)

Meeting adjourned at 6:10 p.m.